World Campaign for Human Rights

Human Rights Newsletter

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Open letter to non-governmental organizations from Antoine Blanca

Dear Friend,

This is the first occasion for me to address the readers of the Newsletter since my appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights. I assure you of my full commitment to the struggle for human rights and of my belief in the importance of information and education in promoting human rights throughout the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the subject of the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights scheduled to take place in Vienna in June 1993.

The decision to convene the Conference was taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/155 of 18 December 1990, after ascertaining that Governments, specialized agencies, United Nations bodies concerned with human rights and non-governmental organizations agreed that it would be desirable to convene a meeting to deal "at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights".

The objectives of the World Conference are the following:

(*a*) to review and assess the progress made in the field of human rights since 1948;

(*b*) to examine the link between development and the universal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights;

(*c*) to strive to improve the implementation of existing human rights instruments;

(*d*) to evaluate the effectiveness of existing human rights United Nations mechanisms and methods;

(*e*) to formulate recommendations for improving the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

(*f*) to ensure that appropriate resources are available for the United Nations human rights programme.

The fulfilment of these objectives requires a common and intensified effort by the wider human rights community.

Non-governmental organizations are essential members of this community with a long and impressive tradition of active involvement in the efforts for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They have played over the years, and continue to play, an essential role in supporting United Nations action in the field of human rights, by providing continuous stimulus and inspiration for both the planning and the implementation of United Nations programmes and activities.

Non-governmental organizations, by their very nature, have a freedom of expression, a flexibility of action and a liberty of movement which enable them to complement our role in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The preparatory process of the World Conference has now arrived at a crucial point. The Preparatory Committee has already held two sessions, in September 1991 and March 1992.

Three regional groups - Latin American and Caribbean, Asian and African - have expressed their desire to hold regional preparatory meetings, which are scheduled to take place in the course of the Autumn of 1992.

As requested by the General Assembly in resolution 45/155, numerous meetings have been organized by the Centre for Human Rights, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions on topics of direct concern to the World Conference and many others are scheduled to be held. The discussion stimulated by these initiatives at the international, regional and national level, the reports and the recommendations emanating from them constitute valuable contributions to the preparatory process leading to the World Conference.

In resolution 45/155, the General Assembly expressed its conviction that the holding of the Conference can "make a significant contribution

to the effectiveness of the actions of the United Nations and its Member States in the promotion and protection of human rights".

The Conference will actually provide a unique opportunity to discuss and evaluate, at the highest level, what has been achieved since 1948 in the field of human rights, what is the present status of the human rights programme and, perhaps most important, what are the perspectives and the desirable direction in which it should develop.

It is an occasion for us not only to reaffirm the international human rights standards already adopted within the United Nations, but also to aim at their universal acceptance and strive for their full implementation.

In identifying the future features of the human rights programme, priority should be given to the search for ways and means to improve the implementation of human rights standards at the international, regional and national level, keeping in mind that the protection of human rights can not be separated from their promotion and from the prevention of violations.

In this sense, I think that greater efforts should be devoted to intensifying education and training in the field of human rights and further developing technical cooperation programmes aimed at building up or strengthening national infrastructures for the promotion and protection of human rights. This kind of activity can significantly sustain the action of Governments in favour of human rights, the respect of which is so closely connected to the achievement of real democracy and development.

Possible targets to be achieved in the field of human rights, which should be affirmed at the World Conference are (*a*) universal ratification of the Covenants and other basic instruments and (*b*) attribution of at least 0.5% of total development cooperation budgets to human rights programmes.

Non-governmental organizations are already actively involved in the preparatory process for the World Conference - attending the first two sessions of the Preparatory Committee, submitting recommendations related both to the Conference's agenda and documentation and organizing satellite meetings.

It is essential to the success of the Conference that these valuable efforts continue. Each of the issues to be addressed at the World Conference can benefit from the non-governmental organizations' competence and commitment. Your role in the preparation of the Conference is twofold. Firstly, you are able to inform the wider public about this initiative, thereby stimulating interest and encouraging widespread participation. This information role is essential because the success of the Conference will depend to a great extent on the support it receives from the international human rights community at large. Secondly, non-governmental organizations are in a unique position to ascertain human rights needs and aspirations worldwide and to ensure that they are addressed by the World Conference.

I know you will continue to support our action to ensure the success of the Conference. I am planning to meet, in connection with the opening of the Sub-Commission, in the first week of August, representatives of non-governmental organizations to discuss with them matters related to the World Conference in Geneva and later in New York. I hope that, on that occasion, we will be able to find new ways of cooperation for the fulfilment of our common objectives.

Antoine Blanca

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

* *SECOND MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (30 March-10 April 1992)*

The Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights held its second session at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 30 March to 10 April 1992 (the report, including the texts of decisions and the list of documents issued for the session, is contained in document A/CONF.157/PC/37). It was attended by 125 States and 77 non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC.

Important issues before the Preparatory Committee included the provisional agenda of the World Conference, its rules of procedure, dates and venue and regional meetings as part of the preparatory process, other meetings, public information activities for the World Conference, studies and documentation.

The draft agenda of the World Conference was the subject of prolonged informal consultations. The matter will be taken up at the third session of the Preparatory Committee, which is scheduled for 14-18 September 1992. Several decisions were taken on the other items, including:

- The decision to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the provisional rules of procedures for the World Conference. Only two issues remain pending: the number of Vice-Presidents in the Bureau and the participation in the regional meetings of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC. These two issues will be considered at the next session of the Preparatory Committee. An important decision was the one permitting national human rights bodies for the protection and promotion of human rights to take part as observers in the World Conference;

- The decision that the studies for the World Conference should commence and be based on indicative annotations of the World Conference secretariat and topics suggested by the Latin American and Caribbean, Asian and African groups and those suggested by the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights;

- The decision to request the Secretary-General to prepare an analytical compilation of the recommendations of the other meetings related

to the preparatory process of the World Conference (see below) and any other meetings which might be held under the auspices of the United Nations human rights programme pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/155;

• The decision to reiterate the invitation for contributions to the voluntary fund for the participation of representatives of least developed countries in the World Conference and the preparatory process. The Committee also expressed its appreciation to the States which had already contributed to the fund;

• The decision to take note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General of the World Conference on public information activities related to the Conference and its preparatory process, which contains a programme intended mainly to highlight the basic issues to be addressed by the World Conference and to create awareness of its significance. The Secretary-General of the World Conference was also urged to ensure coverage of regional meetings.

It may be recalled that the Centre for Human Rights is preparing, in view of the World Conference, a reference guide to United Nations studies and reports on human rights and is updating the publications *United Nations Action in the Field of Human Rights*, *Human Rights: A Compilation of International Instruments* and *Human Rights: Status of International Instruments*. The *Compilation of International Instruments* will also contain, in its new version, the texts of regional human rights instruments.

At its resumed forty-sixth session, on 6 May 1992, the General Assembly accepted the invitation extended by the Government of Austria to host the World Conference, which will therefore be held in Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993. Three regional meetings are scheduled to take place at the end of 1992 at Tunis (for the African Group), San Jose (for the Latin American and Caribbean Group) and Bangkok (for the Asian Group). They are expected to address, from a regional perspective, means of strengthening the implementation of human rights standards at the international, regional and national levels as well as questions relating to the protection and promotion of human rights.

For further information, contact: Secretariat of the World Conference, Centre for Human Rights, Geneva.

SATELLITE MEETINGS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF 1993

In resolution 45/155, the General Assembly decided that the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference should have the mandate to make proposals regarding the preparatory meetings and activities to be held at the international, regional and national levels. Numerous "satellite" meetings have been or are being organized by the Centre for Human Rights, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and academic institutions for the purposes of the World Conference. A list of the meetings which have already been held as well as of those which are scheduled to be held is contained in document A/CONF. 157/PC/22. An updated list of these meetings and of all the reports issued will be presented to the Preparatory Committee at its third session in September 1992. Some of the meetings are referred to in previous issues of the Newsletter. The most recent meetings are outlined below.

* *TRAINING COURSE ON THE HANDLING OF HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION FOR LIBRARY STAFF (Geneva, 21 October-1 November 1991)*

The course was organized jointly by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and co-sponsored by the United Nations Library at Geneva and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in cooperation with specialized agencies. Participants were all from libraries, documentation and information centres from Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America.

The course combined technical and substantive aspects of human rights information handling. Its aim was in fact to provide participants both with theoretical and practical knowledge on human rights, and on how to set up a human rights information and documentation centre. Among the speakers were representatives of the Centre for Human Rights, UNHCR, ILO, WHO, ICRC and from various NGOs concerned with human rights, who lectured on the international instruments for the protection of human rights and the mechanisms set up for their implementation. Representatives of the UN Library, the Centre for Documentation on Refugees (CDR), Human Rights Internet and others addressed topics such as information searches, documentation and database management. Participants also visited the libraries of ILO, UN, IBE and CDR and had the opportunity to carry out research and retrieval of information on various human rights issues.

For further information, contact: Advisory Services and Technical Assistance Section, Centre for Human Rights.

* *EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE CSCE Barcelona (Spain, 13-17 January 1992)*

The European Conference on International Human Rights Standards, held in Barcelona, Spain from 13 to 17 January 1992, was co-organized by the Centre for Human Rights, the Municipality of the City of Barcelona and the United Nations Association of Spain.

The purpose of the conference was to bring together government representatives of the 38 countries participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in order to further enhance their knowledge on the applicability of international norms and standards on human rights and to measure the impact of these norms at their na-

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tional level. Participants in the conference also included representatives of United Nations specialized agencies, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

The main topics covered during the conference were: general presentations on the implementation of international human rights standards, minorities, refugees; the United Nations system for the promotion and protection of human rights; the United Nations treaty-based mechanisms; regional and national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. Several international experts introduced the different aspects of each topic and discussions followed their introductory statements. The conference concluded with two round tables: one on the standard-setting and implementation mechanims for the protection of human rights in the CSCE, the United Nations and the Council of Europe, and the second on the questions of minorities, refugees and migrant workers in the United Nations, CSCE and Council of Europe.

The conference provided an opportunity to exchange views, experiences and information among the CSCE countries on current problems in Europe, as well as the interrelationship between United Nations, Council of Europe and CSCE standards and implementation mechanisms. The need for increased cooperation and coordination between the three systems in order to avoid duplication of activities in fields of common interest was stressed.

A report of the conference will be published by the Centre for Human Rights.

For further information, contact: Advisory Services and Technical Assistance Section, Centre for Human Rights.

* *WORKSHOP ON JUDICIAL TREATMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (Geneva, 5 February 1992)*

A workshop entitled "Global strategies for achieving fairness in the courts: domestic violence", organized by the University of Calgary Group for Research and Education in Human Rights, is the first of a planned five-year series of workshops which will be held annually in Geneva. The workshops are part of the International Project to Promote Fairness in Judicial Processes, which aims at catalysing a global judicial reform movement to eradicate gender and race bias from the administration of justice. The 1992 Workshop, which was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, focused on the legislative and judicial treatment of violence against women. Participants were mostly international non-governmental organizations active in the legal field, associated and working in cooperation with the United Nations.

The workshop consisted of a combination of plenary and small group sessions. Two plenary sessions were devoted to the role of the judiciary in eliminating violence against women and to case studies on gender bias. In addition, concurrent workshops for smaller groups addressed topics such as the judicial treatment of domestic violence and strategies for judicial education, focusing on specific factual and legal analysis of these issues in culturally, socially and economically different jurisdictions. These workshops were led by women from different countries and regions of the world. NGOs were requested to give information on the judicial treatment of wife abuse, the extent of domestic violence in various jurisdictions and existing laws and procedures dealing with domestic violence.

For further information, contact: Kathleen E. Mahoney, Project Director, Faculty of Law, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4.

The following two meetings are part of a series of events leading up to the UNESCO Conference on Human Rights Education and Democracy, scheduled for February 1993, in Montreal, Canada, which will in turn report to the World Conference.

* *SEMINAR ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM (Lund, Sweden, 9-11 March 1992)*

The seminar was organized by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and co-sponsored by UNESCO, the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Univerisities and the World University Service. Participants were professors, experts and representatives of UNESCO and the Centre for Human Rights. The discussion mainly centred on the possibility of establishing international standards on academic freedom. Several participants expressed the view that the UNESCO Conference and subsequently the World Conference could recommend that a draft declaration which might be elaborated in the context of the preparatory/satellite meetings be adopted by the United Nations or UNESCO.

During the seminar it was also stressed that, according to recent publications of the World University Service and Africa Watch, academics in a number of countries are frequent victims of violations which need to be addressed by the human rights community. Rights and freedoms contained in several existing international instruments which are connected to academic freedom - such as equality and non-discrimination, expression, information, scientific research and creative activity, cultural life, education in general and human rights education in particular, development - were discussed at length. Likewise, the necessary juridical, pragmatic and philosophical limitations, as well as the duties and responsibilities, of educators were debated. It was pointed out that, in order to safeguard academic freedom more effectively, a more active use of the implementation procedures available under international human rights instruments for the relevant rights and freedoms would be advisable.

The report of the Seminar has been published by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law.

For further information, contact: Raoul Wallenberg Institute, St. Annegatan 4, S-22350 Lund, Sweden.

* *INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY (Sinaia, Romania, 5-7 May 1992)*

About 150 rectors and chancellors of universities and officials of education ministries, mainly coming from European and North American countries, attended the meeting. The Conference, which was a follow-up of the Lund Seminar (see above), was organized by UNESCO's European Centre for Higher Education, the Romanian National Commission for UNESCO and the National Rec-

tors' Conference of Romania, in co-operation with the Council of Europe and the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities. Among the various issues related to academic freedom which were addressed during the conference were the contribution of higher education to democracy and development, the financing of higher education, quality assessments of teaching and research, the accountability and social responsibility of academia and the role of national and local governments in funding and regulating universities and research institutions. In a final statement of the Conference, as it had already been done at the Lund Seminar, it was agreed to urge UNESCO to give the matter of academic freedom and university autonomy its utmost attention and to prepare an international instrument for the protection and promotion of these values.

For further information, contact: Romanian National Commission, Str. A. Checov 8, Bucarest, 71291, Romania.

Forty-eighth Session of the Commission on Human Rights

The forty-eighth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 27 January to 6 March 1992. The Commission adopted 83 resolutions and 19 decisions aimed at strengthening the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide.

The session began with opening statements by the outgoing chairman, Mr. E. Ballesteros, and Mr. Jan Martenson, former Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights.

The Commission elected Mr. Pal Solt (Hungary) as its Chairman for the forty-eighth session, Mr. Ronald Walker (Australia), Mr. Mohammed Ennaceur (Tunisia) and Mr. Sirous Nasseri (Islamic Republic of Iran) as Vice-Chairpersons and Ms. Ligia Galdos (Colombia) as Rapporteur. As in past years, the Commission addressed several human rights issues; an active dialogue and exchange of views between government representatives, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations took place.

During the six-week session, statements were made by a number of personalities, government representatives and heads of United Nations agencies. Among them were Mr. Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States of America, Mr. Jean Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti, Mr. Andrei Kozirev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Ibrahim Badawi, Chairman of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Ms. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The major issues addressed by the Commission are summarized below. The report of the forty-eighth session is available from the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Geneva (E/CN.4/1992/84).

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

* *SOUTH AFRICA*

The Commission examined the interim report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa which commended the positive changes that had occurred in South Africa since 1990, but at the same time warned that there were still an entire code of discriminatory laws which must be abolished. The Commission, while welcoming the measures taken by the South African authorities to repeal the major laws which had constituted the pillars of apartheid and other positive developments leading to the dismantling of the apartheid system, expressed its concern at reported cases of arbitrary detention and inhuman treatment on children, deaths in detention and police custody, and at the escalation of violence in townships with the alleged complicity of elements of the security organs. It urged the South African authorities to repeal the remaining discriminatory apartheid laws and to introduce the necessary legal and administrative measures to correct entrenched socio-economic inequalities; reiterated the call to all Governments to observe fully the mandatory arms embargo and the request to the Security Council to continue to monitor its effective implementation; appealed to the international community to mobilize and increase material and financial assistance to the victims of apartheid and to assist and enhance the role of humanitarian and human rights groups acting in this field. The Commission also renewed its request to the South African authorities to allow the Ad Hoc Working Group to visit South Africa and to cooperate with it in appraising developments in the situation of human rights in the country.

* *CUBA*

The Commission noted with regret that the Government of Cuba refused to permit the Special Representative appointed by the Secretary-General in 1991 to visit the country in order to fulfil the mandate entrusted to him and expressed its concern at the numerous reports of human rights violations in Cuba. It requested its Chairman to designate the Special Representative as Special Rapporteur of the Commission, with the mandate of reviewing and reporting on the situation of human rights in Cuba. The Special Rapporteur was requested to maintain direct contact with the Government and citizens of Cuba to fulfil his mandate and the Government of Cuba was urged to cooperate with him to this end.

* *MYANMAR*

The situation of human rights in Myanmar was discussed, as in past years, in closed session, according to the procedure used when there is an allegation of a consistent pattern of grave human rights violations in a specific country. Nevertheless, noting that the human rights situation in Myanmar remains serious and that the Government of Myanmar did not fulfil its commitments to ensure the establishment of a democratic State,

the Commission decided to consider the subject at its next session in open meeting. In resolution 1992/58 it decided to nominate a Special Rapporteur mandated to examine the situation of human rights in Myanmar and follow the progress made towards the transfer of power to a civilian government and the drafting of a new constitution, the lifting of restrictions on personal freedoms and the restoration of human rights in the country. He was requested to establish direct contacts with the Government and with the people of Myanmar, including political leaders deprived of their liberty, their families and lawyers.

The Special Rapporteur will report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session and to the Commission at its forty-ninth session, where the matter will be reviewed under the item "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories". The Commission noted with concern the seriousness of the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the existence of important restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms, with particular regard to deprivation of liberty and detention conditions, political rights, right to a fair trial, and cultural rights. It also noted the imposition of oppressive measures directed in particular at minority groups. The Commission urged the Government of Myanmar to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and called upon it to allow the ICRC to visit the country's prisons.

* *IRAQ*

In his report to the Commission, the Special Rapporteur on Iraq made an exceptional recommendation that a team of human rights monitors be dispatched to the country and remain until human rights conditions improve. The Commission requested him to develop this recommendation further and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was renewed for one year.

The Commission also discussed the situation of human rights in other countries, such as Afghanistan, El Salvador, Romania, Iran, Albania, southern Lebanon, and Kuwait (under Iraqi occupation).

* *EL SALVADOR*

The Commission expressed its deep satisfaction at the signing of the Peace Agreements between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martì para la Liberaciòn Nacional in Mexico City on 16 January 1992, which means the end of the armed conflict and lays the foundations for reconciliation within Salvadorian society and acknowledged the value of the good offices provided to this end by Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. It also endorsed the efforts being made by the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, which is mandated to monitor compliance with all agreements reached by the Parties during the negotiating process. The Commission finally requested the Secretary-General to appoint an independent expert to provide assistance in human rights matters to the Government of El Salvador and report to the General Assembly and to the Commission at its forty-ninth session.

* *OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES*

The Commission condemned the policies and practices of Israel, which violate human rights of the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territory under Israeli military occupation. In particular, it condemned the opening of fire on civilians, the demolition and expropriation of houses, the arbitrary and administrative detention of Palestinians, the imposition of economic restrictive measures, the prevention of travel, the practice of torture in Israeli prisons and the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Commission also repeated its appeal to Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territory.

ADVISORY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The Commission reaffirmed that a clear distinction should be made between technical cooperation projects financed under the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the field of Human Rights, and activities under the regular budget. As far as the latter kind of activities are concerned, the Commission welcomed the increasing number of requests from Governments for support and technical assistance in the field of human rights, including the drafting of constitutions and other national legal instruments, as well as assistance in the preparation of democratic elections. At the same time, it encouraged Governments in need of such assistance to avail themselves of the Advisory Services of experts. After expressing its appreciation to Governments and NGOs which made financial contributions to the Voluntary Fund, the Commission emphasized that the objective of the Voluntary Fund is to finance projects aimed at building up and strengthening national and regional institutions and infrastructures which will have a positive long-term impact on the implementation of international human rights instruments.

The Commission also took note with appreciation of the establishment in the Centre for Human Rights of the Technical Cooperation Unit to assist the Secretary-General in the administration and operation of the Voluntary Fund. The importance of cooperation between the Centre for Human Rights and specialized bodies and the organizations of the United Nations system, and especially with United Nations Development Programme as reaffirmed by the Commission, which also requested the Secretary-General to explore further the possibilities of such cooperation.

The Commission examined the situation of human rights in Haiti, Guatemala, Equatorial Guinea, under the item "Advisory Services".

* *HAITI*

The Commission reviewed the report on Haiti of the Independent Expert appointed in 1991. It expressed its deep concern over the human rights violations occurring in the country after the *coup d'état* of September 1991 and strongly condemned the overthrow of President Aristide.

The Commission also requested its Chairman to appoint a special rapporteur to prepare a report on the situation of human rights in Haiti, to be submitted to it at its forty-ninth session, where it will be considered under the agenda item "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories".

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The stamp series on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations Postal Administration will be finished by 1993.

* *EQUATORIAL GUINEA*

The Commission took note of the report of the Expert, indicating that the human rights situation in Equatorial Guinea has deteriorated seriously and expressed its concern at the persistence of violations of human rights, from arbitrary arrests to practice of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment; from the violation of the principle of the independence of the judiciary to restrictions of freedoms of religion, association, peaceful demonstration. The Chairman of the Commission was requested to appoint an independent expert to study in depth the violations of human rights by the Government of Equatorial Guinea, on the basis of information received by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and by the Government of Equatorial Guinea.

The Commission finally decided to consider the question at its forty-ninth session, unless the situation of human rights in the country improves significantly, under the item "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories".

* *GUATEMALA*

The Independent Expert whose mandate was extended, revealed that, despite the efforts of the Government of Guatemala, serious violations of human rights persisted while recognizing the clear commitment of the Government to guarantee the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (through the introduction of legal and institutional reforms). The Commission urged it to intensify investigations to identify the persons responsible for human rights violations.

It decided to consider the question at its forty-ninth session under the item "Advisory Services in the Field of Human Rights" or "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories", in the light of the report which will then be submitted by the Expert and of the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Guatemala.

OTHER ISSUES

* National Institutions

The fundamental role of national institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms was reaffirmed by the Commission, which also recognized their important action in developing and enhancing public awareness of those rights and freedoms. The Commission encouraged the initiatives of Governments, regional, international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations aimed at strengthening existing national institutions and establishing such institutions where they do not exist. It requested the Secretary-General to respond favourably to requests from Member States for assistance in the establishment and strengthening of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights as part of the Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation Programme in the field of human rights and welcomed the convening in Paris from 7 to 9 October 1991, by the Centre for Human Rights, of an international workshop on national institutions.

The recommendations contained in the report of the workshop (indicated in doc. E/CN.4/1992/43), and in particular the principles relating to the status of commissions and their advisory role, were renamed "Principles relating to the status of national institutions" and were transmitted to the General Assembly, through the ECOSOC, for adoption.

The Commission also requested the Secretary-General to transmit the proceedings of the Paris workshop to the next Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights and to commence the planning of a follow-up international workshop in 1993.

* Draft Protocol to the Convention against Torture

In resolution 1992/43, the Commission decided to establish an open-ended intersessional working group in order to elaborate a draft optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Protocol should establish a system of periodic visits to places of detention, which is considered a highly effective preventive measure against the occurrence of torture. The basis for discussion would be the proposal presented on the topic by the Government of Costa Rica in January 1991. The Commission requested the working group to meet for a period of two weeks prior to its forty-ninth session and invited all Governments, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to participate in the activities of the working group. It also encouraged the Committee against Torture, the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture, international and regional bodies with experience in visiting places of detention, Governments and concerned non-governmental organizations to submit comments

on the draft protocol to the working group.

* Draft Declaration on Minorities

The Commission approved the text of the draft declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, which has been elaborated by the open-ended working group set up for this purpose in 1978. The draft declaration consists of several preambular articles and nine substantive articles. It provides an extensive enumeration of individual and collective rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. The draft declaration recognizes to minorities, *inter alia*, the rights to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination. It also stipulates that they have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life, as well as in decision-making on the national and regional level concerning the minority to which they belong; the right to establish and maintain their own associations and free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties. The draft declaration not only enumerates rights, but also stipulates that States shall take measures to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law. States shall also take measures to create favourable conditions to enable minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, tradition and customs, as well as to learn their mother tongue. It also identifies other measures in the field of education, in order to encourage minorities' knowledge of their history, traditions, language and culture, and to enable them to participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country.

With the approval of the draft declaration by the Commission, the working group has discharged its mandate. The draft declaration must now be approved by the Economic and Social Council prior to its adoption by the General Assembly.

* Rights of the Child

The Programme of Action for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, which had been submitted by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in August 1991, was adopted by the Commission, which also recommended that all States adopt legislative and administrative measures necessary to carry out the Programme at the national and international levels, urged the United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations concerned to bear in mind the Programme in the design of their policies and urged all non-governmental organizations to adopt it for the development of activities relating to their mandates. The question of the implementation of the Programme will be examined every two years.

The Commission also considered the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, whose mandate was extended for three years. The Special Rapporteur was recommended to bear in mind the Programme of Action adopted at the same session in developing his activities under his mandate and to cooperate closely with the other United Nations bodies concerned with the protection of children's rights.

The report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was also examined by the Commission, which welcomed the results achieved by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its first session, held in Geneva at the end of 1991.

* Arbitrary Detention

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which had been established by the Commission in 1991 with the task of investigating cases of detention imposed arbitrarily or otherwise inconsistently with the relevant international standards, presented its first report on its activities as well as methods of work. At the time of the presentation of the report, the Working Group had only held two sessions. It therefore stressed that the report was a preliminary one, mainly meant to express the Working Group's views on its mandate, methods of work and principles applying to the examination of the cases submitted to it and did not contain any conclusion or final recommendation on such cases.

The Commission expressed its satisfaction for the work accomplished by the five independent experts who compose the working group and invited them to continue to carry out their task with discretion, objectivity and independence (see p. 9).

* Enforced Disappearances

The Commission approved the Draft Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance which was presented by the relevant Working Group, and decided to transmit it to the General Assembly for adoption, through the ECOSOC.

The Declaration defines any act of enforced disappearance as an offence to human dignity and a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration and other international human rights instruments. It states that no special circumstance, such as war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, can justify enforced disappearances and asks States to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance in any territory under their jurisdiction. After affirming the principle of non refoulement towards States where there are substantial grounds to believe that a person would be in danger of enforced disappearance, the Declaration also enumerates a series of rights of persons deprived of their liberty and the right of victims of acts of enforced disappearance and their family to adequate compensation.

* Emergency mechanism

A proposal for the establishment of an emergency mechanism of the Commission on Human Rights to consider serious violations of human rights was presented by the Austrian delegation. The proposal aims at allowing the Commission "to react. . . to an acute situation arising from a violation of human rights".

The Commission decided to resume consideration of the proposed mechanism at its forty-ninth session, taking also into account further suggestions on the subject.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES AND SPECIAL PROCEDURES

* WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION MEETS

The first report on the activities, mandate and methods of work of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, was presented to the forty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights (see p. 8), one year after the decision of creating the Working Group had been taken (E/CN.4/1992/20).

The Working Group then held its third session from 23 to 27 March 1992 at the Palais des Nations (United Nations), Geneva, Switzerland. Nine new cases of alleged arbitrary detention were considered and transmitted to Governments. The Working Group also continued the consideration of its methods of work and adopted several decisions, or "deliberations" on questions of principle referred to in the above-mentioned report as "special situations receiving the consideration of the Working Group".

Since the beginning of its activity, in September 1991, the Working Group has transmitted 38 communications concerning several dozens of alleged arbitrary detentions to Governments and has so far received 17 replies. In accordance with its methods of work, the Working Group transmitted the Government replies to the sources from which the communications were received, with a request for comments on the subject. In several cases the Working Group has already received such comments and was therefore in a position to take a decision on the cases. In cases in which Governments do not reply to communications transmitted to them by the chairman within the 90-day deadline established by the Working Group, the latter, in accordance with its own methods of work, may also take a decision on the basis of all the data at its disposal.

For further information, contact: Special Procedures Section, Centre for Human Rights.

* MISSION TO THE MIDDLE EAST OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A two-week field mission to the Middle East to review the latest developments relating to the human rights situation in the territories occupied by Israel was conducted by the United Nations Special Committee on Israeli Practices from 28 April to 10 May 1992.

The Special Committee was established by the General Assembly in 1968 and is mandated to investigate Israeli practices as they affect the human rights situation in the territories occupied by Israel and to report thereon through the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. The Special Committee has consistently been denied access to the territories occupied by Israel and is therefore relying on reports appearing in the Israeli press, in other media, including the Arab language press published in the occupied territories, as well as on oral evidence provided by persons having first-hand knowledge of the situation in those territories.

The Special Committee is composed of three members representing States. The present members are Mr. Stanley Kalpage, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations; Mr. Dragan Jovanic, Professor of Law, Yugoslavia; Mr. Alioune Sene, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

During the above-mentioned mission the members of the Special Committee (Senegal was represented by its Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Egypt) met at Damascus (Syria), Amman (Jordan) and Cairo (Egypt), with high ranking government officials and heard 38 witnesses with first-hand experience of the situation in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During a visit to the Palestinian Red Crescent Hospital, in Cairo, they also heard testimonies of Palestinian patients, who are residents of the occupied territories.

The testimonies gathered confirmed the persistence of a serious human rights situation in the territories. A large number of witnesses denounced the repressive measures and harsh methods that the Israeli authorities continue to use in order to quell the resistance of Palestinians and other Arabs against the occupation. The Israeli settlement policy continues to be one of the main causes of human rights violations. All categories of civilians, including children, women and the elderly, are victims of the violent methods used by the Israeli soldiers and police forces. Many restrictive regulations on entry into Israel and in the field of employment, as well as a discriminatory system of taxation seriously affect the economic conditions of Palestinians and other Arabs of the occupied territories.

Many persons also denounced the use of torture and inhuman treatment, particularly during interrogation and detention. Grave deficiencies are also evident in the administration of justice, which largely falls within the competence of military courts. The procedures before these courts have been described as summary and arbitrary, denying basic legal safeguards.

The Special Committee will meet again at Geneva, Switzerland, from 24 to 28 August 1992 to consider and adopt its twenty-fourth report to the General Assembly. This report, which is the last of the three reports adopted in the course of the year by the Special Committee, will contain the results of the field mission as well as conclusions and recommendations.

For further information, contact: Special Procedures Section, Centre for Human Rights, Geneva.

* HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Eleven communications alleging, *inter alia*, the violations of the right to life, ill-treatment during detention, denial of the right to a fair trial and discrimination in the enjoyment of social security benefits were examined by the Human Rights Committee at its forty-fourth session, held at New York from 23 March to 10 April 1992. Individual communications can only be received by the Committee if they concern States parties to the Optional Protocol to the International Cov-

enant on Civil and Political Rights and meet certain criteria specified under the Optional Protocol. They are confidential and are examined in private meetings. Views adopted by the Committee on communications previously declared admissible, as well as its decisions of inadmissibility, are made public after the session and reproduced in the Committee's Annual Report to the General Assembly. At its latest session, the Committee adopted views on nine communications, including five cases involving capital punishment, and in seven of them found violations of the Covenant. Two cases were declared inadmissible. Due to events occurring in Yugoslavia which had affected human rights protected under the Covenant, Yugoslavia had been requested, on 4 November 1991, to submit its third periodic report for discussion at the Committee's forty-fourth session. This report was considered by the Committee, together with those of Colombia, Belgium, Algeria and Peru. The consideration of the second periodic report of Peru could not be concluded at that session and was to be referred to the Committee's forty-fifth session, scheduled for 13-31 July 1992. Furthermore, Peru was requested to submit additional information relating to events that had occurred in the country subsequent to the examination of the report.

The Committee adopted revised general comments on articles 7 and 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, regarding respectively the prohibition of torture and the right to humane conditions of detention, and initiated work on a draft of general comments on article 18, which guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and article 25, which relates to the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

It also decided to change its methods of work under article 40 of the Covenant by adopting concluding observations reflecting the views of the Committee as a whole at the end of the consideration of each State party report. Such comments referred to positive developments that had been noticed during the period under review, factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Covenant, specific issues of concern regarding the implementation of the Covenant by the State party, and recommendations or suggestions by the Committee. This new method of work was implemented for the first time during this session and, consequently, comments were adopted regarding the reports of Algeria, Belgium, Colombia, Peru and Yugoslavia.

For further information, contact: International Instruments Section, Centre for Human Rights, Geneva.

* COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

The eighth session of the Committee against Torture was held at Geneva, Switzerland, from 27 April to 8 May 1992. In November 1991, the States parties to the Convention against Torture had elected five human rights experts to serve in their personal capacity as members of the Committee and replace those members whose terms were due to expire at the end of the year. The new members are Mr. Hassib Ben Ammar (Tunisia), Mr. Fawzi El Ibrashi (Egypt), Mr. Hugo Lorenzo (Uruguay), while Mr. Peter Thomas Burns (Canada) and Mr. Ricardo Gil Lavedra (Argentina) were re-elected.

The Committee considered, under article 19 of the Convention, the reports of Uruguay, Luxembourg, Italy and Romania to review measures taken by those States parties to prevent and punish acts of torture.

It also continued the consideration of communications from individuals claiming that any of their rights as enumerated in the Convention have been violated by a State party to the treaty. Only one allegation has so far been declared admissible by the Committee, and it is still being examined.

A new and very important topic discussed at this session was the question of a draft optional protocol to the Convention. The Commission on Human Rights at its forty-eighth session had in fact decided to establish a working group for the elaboration of such protocol, which would permit a subcommittee of independent experts to make visits to places of detention in the States parties to it (see p. 7).

The Committee finally discussed its contribution to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and suggestions to be made by its representative at the next session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference in September 1992.

For further information, contact: International Instruments Section, Centre for Human Rights, Geneva.

(Fact Sheet No. 17 on the Committee against Torture is available from the External Relations and Information Section, Centre for Human Rights)

* UN VOLUNTARY FUND FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

About 60 applications for assistance to victims of torture and members of their families were considered at the eleventh session of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, which met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 27 April to 1 May 1992. The Board examined about 25 new projects submitted for support and evaluated some 100 projects which it has subsidized. It recommended to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the funding of, or continued support for, some 70 projects either currently in progress or planned for 1992 and 1993, involving expenditures of approximately $1.6 million. More than $3 million would have been needed to respond adequately to the request at hand, but the Board had to limit its recommendations because of lack of appropriate funds. Since its creation, the Fund has collaborated with some hundred organizations on approximately 160 projects in about 40 countries. These projects fall essentially into the following fields: psychotherapy, medical care, social rehabilitation, training of professionals and volunteers (doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists, paramedical personnel, social workers, etc.) for the specialized treatment of torture victims. In addition to helping victims directly, the Fund has also been able to assist the relatives of victims, with their psychological, economical and social problems and has contributed to the development and application of suitable treatments for torture victims. Addressing the Board of Trustees at the opening of its eleventh session, Mr. Antoine Blanca, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, declared: "It is important that this support be sustained over a long period because, as the experience of the organizations we are assisting shows, the physical and psychological after-effect of torture may last for years after the act of torture was committed. The Fund's support will therefore have to con-

tinue as long as victims suffer from sequelae and until governments or specialized non-governmental organizations have taken over from the Fund".

Individuals, organizations and Governments are encouraged to make contributions, in the form of cheques, which should be sent to:

Secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Centre for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Account number A/C C0-5901601, Societé de Banques Suisses.

* *WORKING GROUP ON CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY*

The seventeenth session of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery was held in Geneva from 4 to 13 May 1992. It was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights and devoted to an overall evaluation of the activities of the Group in the last three years: the prevention of the sale of children, of child prostitution and child pornography (1989); the eradication of the exploitation of child labour and debt bondage (1990) and the prevention of traffic in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others (1991).

The five members of the Working Group welcomed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to adopt the Programme of Action for the prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (resolution 1992/74) and, at the request of the Commission reformulated the draft programme of action for the elimination of the exploitation of child labour on the basis of the report prepared by the Secretary-General pursuant to resolutions 1991/54 and 55 of the Commission on Human Rights.

The Working Group considered that slavery, in its various forms, is a crime against humanity and contrary to *jus cogens* rules of customary international law. The Working Group further considered that its own work could be strengthened by drawing upon the expertise of different United Nations bodies dealing with issues relating to contemporary forms of slavery. An improvement in coordination and cooperation between these bodies and the Working Group was also considered to be important in enhancing its effectiveness.

The Working Group also considered the following matters: the removal of organs from children, slavery-like practices of apartheid and colonialism; disappearances linked to contemporary forms of slavery; the machinery for monitoring the international slavery conventions and the United Nations Trust Fund on contemporary forms of slavery.

Finally, the Working Group decided to devote its eighteenth session to revising the draft programme of action for the prevention of traffic in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others, in the light of comments pursuant to resolution 1992/36 (Commission on Human Rights). Particular attention will be given to items such as the training of law enforcement officials and police, economic development programmes, information campaigns, education programmes for children in danger, new forms of legislation, rehabilitation measures and the protection of working children.

For further information, contact: Legislation Branch, Centre for Human Rights, Geneva.

ELECTIONS

COUNSELLING DEMOCRACY: THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

With the end of the Cold War, and the appearance of a global trend toward democratization, renewed interest in standards for free and fair elections has become evident. Against this background, the international community has increased its efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the principle of free and fair elections, and to provide assistance to countries seeking to conduct them.

The Centre for Human Rights has been at the forefront of such efforts. As the principal unit of the Secretariat concerned with human rights, the Centre provides technical assistance to Governments in the legal and technical aspects of democratic elections. It does so through its programme of Advisory Services and Technical Assistance, with support from the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights. A diverse range of countries have requested and received such assistance, most recently Romania and Lesotho.

In November of 1991, the Centre sent a delegation to Lesotho to assist the Government in the legal and technical aspects of elections to be held in 1992. A detailed analytical report was prepared for the Government and a series of follow-up projects are now under preparation.

A similar mission visited Romania in April of 1992, to provide advice and technical assistance for upcoming elections there.

The electoral assistance provided to Romania is part of a comprehensive programme of advisory services and technical assistance currently under way between the Centre and the Government of Romania.

In each case, the Centre for Human Rights draws upon the expertise of its staff, a collection of electoral laws from various jurisdictions, a roster of experts and a network of non-governmental organizations, to assist Governments in the highly technical undertaking of assuring the basic right of free and fair elections.

Suggestions made in the context of such projects are based upon international standards for free and fair elections, the comparative practice of other democratic jurisdictions and the analysis of international experts and specialized staff. The approach itself may best be characterized as pragmatic, and areas of attention range from assuring the institution of a secret ballot to organizing public information efforts.

Given the success of these efforts thus far and the increasing level of requests for such assistance, the programme is expected to continued its current pattern of growth.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

* INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Nearly 100 people met at the Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Santiago, Chile, from 18 to 22 May 1992, to discuss the relationship indigenous peoples have with the environment. The meeting was organized by the Centre for Human Rights and the Government of Chile and is one of a series of events being held for the 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The participants included indigenous peoples from Australia, Greenland, New Zealand, Norway, Tanzania and many countries in South and Central America as well as from Chile itself. Fifteen Governments and seven intergovernmental organizations also attended. The Santiago Conclusions and Recommendations recognized a number of working principles, including the recognition that indigenous knowledge and practices are essential contributions to sustainable management of the environment. Among the key recommendations of the meeting were the following:

- that development projects affecting indigenous peoples be preceded by socio-economic and environmental impact studies with the participation of indigenous peoples;
- that the United Nations take measures to protect the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples;
- that multilateral financial institutions develop procedures for the participation of indigenous peoples in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects;
- that biosphere reserves and natural parks in indigenous territories be established only with the consent of indigenous peoples;
- that the United Nations and other organizations providing assistance recruit indigenous peoples as expert advisers on matters affecting them;
- that the Centre for Human Rights prepare a manual on indigenous peoples' environmental knowledge and conservation experience.

The report of the meeting and all the recommendations and conclusions are available in Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1992/31. Advance copies of the report of this first ever United Nations conference on indigenous peoples and the environment were made available at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

* VOLUNTARY FUND FOR INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS MEETS FOR FIFTH SESSION

The Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations met for its fifth session from 27 April to 1 May 1992. The Fund was established to provide indigenous peoples with travel and expenses so that they can attend the annual meetings of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. This year it will break all records by providing assistance to 41 indigenous peoples from 19 different countries. About $170,000 will be disbursed.

Since the Fund was set up the support from Governments and non-governmental organizations has grown. In 1991 and 1992 contributions were received from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Grenada, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Tunisia as well as from the World Council of Churches. Following the visit to Japan in 1991 of the Chairperson-Rapporteur, Ms. Erica-Irene Daes, several parliamentarians and businesses also made contributions. Further information about the Fund can be obtained from the Centre. . .

* INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Since the last Newsletter was published, the Centre for Human Rights has been given the responsibility for coordinating the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples. The General Assembly in its resolution 46/128 appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights as the Coordinator of the Year, adopted a theme for the Year - "Indigenous peoples - a new partnership" - and approved the programme of activities contained in the annex.

In March the Coordinator called a first technical meeting on the International Year (see the report of the meeting: E/CN.4/1992/AC.4/TM/8). A second meeting on the Year will be held from 3 to 5 August 1992, just following the tenth session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

Helen McLaughlin, a senior-level staff member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, has joined the Centre for Human Rights for 18 months to help plan and implement the activities of the International Year. She has worked in Aboriginal affairs for the last 20 years and is the first of several indigenous expert advisers coming to help with preparations for the Year.

Participants in the United Nations seminar on indigenous peoples and the environment, held in Santiago, Chile.

UNITED NATIONS SEMINARS

* *TRAINING COURSE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS (Mbabane, Swaziland, 18-22 May 1992)*

The course was organized by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in cooperation with the Kingdom of Swaziland. Its principal purpose was to broaden, throughout the country, knowledge of and support for internationally recognized human rights standards. More specifically, the training course was designed to assist the Government of Swaziland in strengthening its infrastructure for the promotion and protection of human rights and to encourage the ratification of those major human rights instruments to which Swaziland is not yet party. The project also sought to facilitate cooperation between government agencies and non-governmental human rights organizations operating in Swaziland.

The course was aimed at persons from both the public and private sectors. Government participants included ministers and senior officials from the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, Labour and Foreign Affairs. Police and prison officials were also in attendance along with representatives of non-governmental organizations and a number of persons attending in their personal capacity.

The course covered a number of major human rights topics. The International Bill of Human Rights was examined in detail as was the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other topics under discussion included: the United Nations system and human rights; the African Charter and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; the role of non-governmental organizations in the protection and promotion of human rights; national institutions; police and human rights; human rights of prisoners and detainees and domestic implementation of international human rights standards. A special presentation on international refugee law was made by the local representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This topic was of particular interest to participants as Swaziland has recently become a major destination of persons seeking asylum from civil unrest in South Africa and Mozambique.

All those involved in the training course agreed that it had greatly improved awareness of human rights standards amongst those persons most closely connected with their implementation. The Centre for Human Rights is maintaining its contact with the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland and a follow-up mission is expected to be conducted during 1993. A report of the training course is available from the Advisory Services and Technical Assistance section of the Centre for Human Rights.

For further information, contact: Advisory Services and Technical Assistance Section, Centre for Human Rights.

* *TRAINING COURSE ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (San Remo, Italy, 9-13 March 1992)*

The training course was organized by the Centre for Human Rights in cooperation with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law of San Remo and with the support of the Italian Government. It followed the organization of a course for French-speaking African countries on the same topic last year, and was intended for officials of English-speaking African countries. The aim of the training course was to assist government officials from the region to ensure effective knowledge and application of international human rights standards and procedures as well as to facilitate interaction between concerned governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations.

About 20 participants, senior officials concerned with the items under discussion, such as magistrates, officials responsible for the application of law, lawyers and university professors, attended the course. The agenda covered the following issues: the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights; the implementation machinery in the field of human rights; international human rights standards and regional national institutions; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the African Commission; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid; the Convention against Torture; human rights in the administration of justice; protection of individuals subject to detention or imprisonment; the role of the police in the protection of human rights. Presentations by international experts of the various subjects were followed by thorough discussions.

For further information, contact: Advisory Services and Technical Assistance Section, Centre for Human Rights.

* *BALTIC SEMINARS ON HUMAN RIGHTS*

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees organized in March-April 1992 a series of three seminars on the topic "Refugee Law and Human Rights in the Baltic States". The seminars - which took place in Lohusalu, Estonia (16 - 18 March), Ligatne, Latvia (8-12 April) and Polanga, Lithuania (21 - 24 April) - aimed at providing participants with basic information on: the United Nations and human rights, UNHCR, the international instruments in the field of refugees and UNHCR Nordic and global activities. The seminars were attended by government officials working in fields associated with human rights issues, such as labour, immigration, justice, police.

Lectures given by representatives of UNHCR and the Centre for Human Rights covered fields in which government experience is limited. They focused on the United Nations system, the United Nations activities in the field of human rights, the European system for the protection of human rights, the migration question, the international refugee law, the impact of the United Nations human rights programme on the municipal system. Government representatives of the Baltic countries provided their experience on matters of particular relevance to each of them, for instance national immigration and citizenship system and policy. Experiences of government officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations from other countries (Denmark, Finland,

Norway and Sweden) on how to deal with refugee issues, including procedural aspects and case studies, were also useful contributions to the discussions, as was the input from representatives of the International Organization for Migration.

Other important topics addressed during the seminars were cooperation between United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations and the question of what the Baltic States can expect to evolve from their membership in the United Nations. The Seminars provided a useful opportunity to familiarize Governments officials of the new States with the United Nations human rights programme and UNHCR activities and to enable participants from abroad to get a better insight into the specific problems of each Baltic country.

For further information, contact: UNHCR, International Protection Division, Centre William Rappard, Geneva.

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

AFRICAN COMMISSION HOLDS ITS ELEVENTH SESSION

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held its 11th session in Tunis from 2 to 9 March 1992. A representative of the Centre for Human Rights attended the meeting. The Commission, chaired by its newly elected Chairman, Mr. Ibrahim Badawi, adopted a plan of work, the main components of which are the following: organization of training courses and seminars; creation of a centre for information and documentation, aimed at helping documentation for the work of the Commission and NGOs; establishment of intersessional working groups designed to prepare the work of the Commission; publication of a review of the Commission, a press bulletin and an annual report.

For further information, contact: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Karaiba Ave., P.O. Box 673, Banjul, The Gambia.

NGO EVENTS

* *FIRST SESSIONS OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF UNIVERSITY JINANE (Tripoli, Lebanon, 4-6 November 1991)*

The Centre for Human Rights of the University Jinane, in Tripoli, Lebanon, was inaugurated on 4 November 1991. Its main purpose is to assure the widest diffusion of information on human rights in the region. The inauguration of the Centre was followed by a three-day session on human rights, where government representatives, national and international experts, as well as representatives of international organizations, addressed the following topics: United Nations activity in the field of human rights, the Geneva Conventions on humanitarian law and their application in the Gulf War, refugees' rights and conditions in the Arab countries, international labour conventions.

In April 1992 the Centre held its second session, which aimed at contributing to the preparatory process for the World Conference on Human Rights. A *journée d'étude* was devoted to the works and results of the forty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights, with particular attention to the debate and resolutions concerning the Palestinian question. The second part of the session focused on the rights of the child. Several international bodies, such as the Centre for Human Rights, UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, ILO, WHO, UNDP, were either represented or addressed messages to the session. The resolution adopted by participants at the end of the meeting contained an appeal to the Government of Lebanon and the other Governments of the Middle East region to fully respect and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For further information, contact: Centre for Human Rights, University Jinane, P.O.Box 818, Tripoli, Lebanon, or 4 B, Chemin de la Beraille, 1226 Thônex, Suisse.

* *ARAB-AFRICAN SEMINAR ON PENAL JUSTICE AND PENITENTIARY REFORMS (Tunis, 29 November-2 December 1991)*

More than 120 participants, NGOs, experts, international organizations and representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs of Arab and African countries, attended the seminar organized jointly by the Arab Institute of Human Rights, the Tunisian League of Human Rights and Penal Reform International, and co-sponsored by the Centre for Human Rights.

The purpose of the seminar was to discuss issues relating to the international standards on the treatment of prisoners and their application in Arab and African countries, the penal and penitentiary situation in some of the countries represented, the assistance to facilitate the reentry of offenders into society, the penal and penitentiary reform. A main topic under discussion was also the practice of torture on detainees and arrested persons; some participants witnessed abuses and human rights violations in prison. At the conclusion of the seminar a number of technical recommendations were adopted, concerning preventive detention, the independence of the judiciary and the guarantee of the rights of defence, penitentiary reform. Among the more general recommendations were the condemnation of torture and of the death penalty, the appeal to Arab and African Governments to accede to the international human rights instruments, the appeal to elaborate an African convention against torture and degrading and inhuman treatment.

For further information, contact: Arab Institute for Human Rights, 23, Avenue Mohieddine Kiibi, El Manar III, Tunis 1004, Tunisia.

* *INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION SESSION (Yaoundé, Cameroon, 3-11 April 1992)*

The eighty-seventh Inter-Parliamentary Conference was attended by national groups from 89 countries and about 30 observing organizations, among which several international organizations.

The Executive Committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Council, governing bodies of the Union, also held their sessions. Some of the topics discussed in Yaoundé related to human rights, such as women's participation in political life; contribution of Parliaments to the release of prisoners of war, detainees and hostages still held as a result of wars or occupations; special role of parliamentary diplomacy in peacemaking and

peace-keeping; human rights of Parliamentarians. Due to the Union's successful action in the field of human rights, an amendment of the statute was proposed in order to include among the aims of the Union the contribution to the defence and promotion of human rights.

For further information, contact: Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, Case Postale 438, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland.

* *THIRD COURSE ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION (Lima, Peru, 7-10 April 1992)*

For the third year, the Andean Commission of Jurists organized, under the auspices of the International Commission of Jurists, a course on the international protection of human rights for about 60 law students, lawyers and other human rights defenders. The course aimed at providing participants with basic information on the existing international mechanisms for the protection of human rights and further encourage their utilization, as well as promoting the exchange of experiences among people working for the promotion and defence of human rights in the Andean region. The topics addressed by the speakers, international experts and two representatives of the Centre for Human Rights, included: general overview of the international mechanisms for the protection of human rights, universal mechanisms based on treaties and extra-conventional mechanisms dealing with violations of human rights under country-oriented and thematic-oriented special rapporteurs or working groups established by the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American system, the international humanitarian law and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the role of non-governmental organizations. The course was also meant to give participants more practical information on the mechanisms available at the international level and how to choose the most appropriate one for each case.

For further information, contact: Mr. Diego García-Sayán, Executive Director, Andean Commission of Jurists, Los Sauces 285, Lima 27, Peru.

* *SYMPOSIUM ON OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN (Lyon, France, 7-9 April 1992)*

The First International Symposium on Offences against Children and Young Persons was organized by INTERPOL and held at the Organization's Headquarters in Lyon. Law enforcement officials from 24 countries as well as members of the INTERPOL Secretariat attended the meeting. Representatives of a number of INTERPOL member countries (Brazil, United States of America, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Algeria and Spain) made presentations on offences against minors, child pornography, sexual exploitation of children, sex tourism, missing and run-away children, exchange of investigation techniques including interviewing children who were victims of sexual abuse and various aspects of national legislation on child-related matters. A representative of the Centre for Human Rights explained the work of the United Nations relating to child victims. Ways of establishing and strengthening co-operation between INTERPOL and the United Nations in such areas as crime statistics, prevention of crimes against children and assistance to victims, as well as in training of police officers, were also discussed.

For further information, contact: INTERPOL, 50, Quai Achille Lignon, 69006 Lyon, France.

* *HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (Notre-Dame-du-Pré, 6-10 April 1992)*

From 6 to 10 April 1992 the Centre international de formation à l'enseignement des droits de l'homme (CIFEDHOP) organized a training session on human rights teaching for French teachers in co-operation with the Syndicat national français des instituteurs et professeurs de collèges (SNI-PEGC) which took place in Notre-Dame-du-Pré, in Savoy, France. The purpose of the session was to provide teachers with a deeper knowledge on legal and political terms and concepts related to human rights, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations concerned with human rights such as the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, methods to introduce human rights in the school curricula and the teacher's role. A representative of the Centre for Human Rights was invited to lecture at the session on the rights of the child and the United Nations action for the elimination of racial discrimination. CIFEDHOP is also organizing an international training session on human rights for teachers worldwide. The session is scheduled for July 1992.

For further information, contact: SNI-PEGC, 209, boulevard Saint-Germain, 75007 Paris, France.

* *INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON FILIATION, IDENTIFICATION AND RESTITUTION OF CHILDREN OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS (Buenos Aires, 11-13 April 1992)*

The problem of filiation, identification and restitution of children of disappeared persons was addressed at the seminar organized by the "Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo" from three different perspectives. At the scientific level, the seminar discussed the validity of tests used to establish filiation. At the legal level, the question of the appropriation of children as a penal crime and the question of illegal adoption, restitution, as well as other questions of civil law were addressed by specialists in this field. Relevant legislative standards, both in force and under elaboration in Argentina, the United States of America and Europe were also discussed. Furthermore, part of the debate was devoted to international instruments applying to the case of disappeared children, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the text declaration on the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance.

The psychological effects on children caused by appropriation and lies about their identity and origin, as wellas by their return to the family of origin, after they have lived for years with false parents, were explained by psychologists and psychiatrists. National experts addressed, in the context of interdisciplinary sessions, matters related to the Argentinian society such as the problem of disappeared children and the role of the "Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo".

Participants in the seminars included experts in the legal and psychological fields, highly specialized in themes related to disappeared children. Local NGOs were also represented.

For further information, contact: Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Corrientes 3284, 4.° Piso, Depto. H-1193 Capital Federal, Argentina.

* INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUY ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (Lisbon, 22-24 April 1992)

The Colloquy was organized by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Portugal. Participants came mainly from the French and Portuguese-speaking parts of Africa and included Government representatives and NGOs.

The agenda of the Colloquy covered the relationship between democracy and respect for human rights; the comparative analysis of legal protection of human rights in Europe and Africa; the implementation of the norms protecting human rights.

An important part of the debate was devoted to the situation of human rights in the countries of origin of the participants and to the activities of NGOs to promote respect for human rights. The session was a valuable occasion to share human rights experiences and discuss problems related to the governmental and non-governmental action for the promotion of human rights.

For further information, contact: North-South Centre, Avenida da Liberdade, 229, 4^A, P-1200, Lisbon, Portugal.

* CONFERENCE ON "INFORMATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS" (Crete, Greece, 4-7 May 1992)

The Conference, organized by Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, International (HURIDOCS), was attended by 184 participants coming from 64 countries, mainly representatives of human rights non-governmental organizations and research institutions. The Centre for Human Rights, UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, the Council of Europe and OECD were also represented at the meeting.

The aims of the conference were to share and evaluate experiences on different aspects of human rights information handling as well as discuss perspectives for its future. It also aimed at identifying ways and means to strengthen and enlarge the HURIDOCS network of human rights organizations concerned with information and documentation.

The conference consisted of a combination of plenary and working group sessions. The plenary sessions were devoted to topics such as: human rights work in difficult situations, human rights violations in a global village, human rights and violent conflicts. Presentations by human rights activists and experts were followed by a general discussion. Beside that, four thematic working groups addressed the following topics: bibliographic and referential standard formats, standard formats for human rights violations, access to human rights information, the future of human rights information handling. Regional groups also met to discuss concrete ways to strengthen collaboration and improve networking at regional level. The report of the conference will be available from HURIDOCS within the next months.

The general assembly of HURIDOCS was held just after the conference. It adopted guidelines for future HURIDOCS activities and elected the new members of the HURIDOCS governing bodies.

For further information, contact : HURIDOCS Secretariat, Torggate 27, 0183 Oslo, Norway.

APPEAL TO OUR READERS

The Centre for Human Rights is interested in collecting books, information and education materials, recent publications and any kind of documentation in the field of human rights. These materials would be an invaluable resource for the staff of the Centre as well as for members of the various United Nations human rights bodies which meet here in Geneva.

Non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, school and other bodies involved in the publication and dissemination of human rights information are invited to contact the External Relations and Information Section or to send materials directly to us at the address given below.

The Centre for Human Rights is the lead agency of the United Nations in the field of human rights. It provides secretariat and substantive services to United Nations bodies concerned with human rights questions, administers the programme of advisory services and technical assistance on human rights, and coordinates the relevant activities of the World Campaign for Human Rights within the United Nations system. It ensures liaison with Governments, non-governmental organizations, external institutions and the media, and is responsible for the collection, production and dissemination of human rights publications.

Further information: United Nations Centre for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Telephone: (4122) 734 60 11/ 731 02 11; telex: 289696; fax: 73339879; cable: UNATIONS, Geneva; or New York Office, Centre for Human Rights, United Nations Headquarters, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

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